

# US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



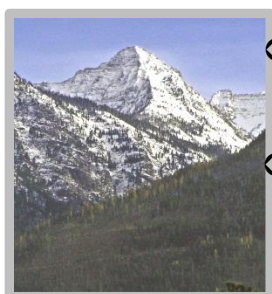
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

*Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas*

**Issue Date:** 8 AM, Friday, January 13, 2012  
**Valid Until:** Midnight, Friday, January 13, 2012  
**Next Update:** Tuesday, January 17, 2012  
**Issued by:** Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

## All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



### Avalanche Danger Summary

**2 - Moderate : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain**

**1 - Low : below 5,000**

## AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

**All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation**

<b>Danger Level</b>	<b>2 - Moderate</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	Good
<b>Travel Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies</li> <li>Evaluate snow and terrain carefully</li> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Likelihood of Avalanches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural avalanche <b>unlikely</b></li> <li>Human triggered avalanches <b>possible</b></li> </ul>
<b>Avalanche Size &amp; Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small avalanches in specific areas or</li> <li>Larger avalanches in isolated areas</li> <li><b>Concern is steep, open slopes and gullies lacking vegetative and terrain anchors</b></li> </ul>

## AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

**All Mountain Ranges - below 5,000 ft. elevation**

<b>Danger Level</b>	<b>1 - LOW</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	Good
<b>Travel Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally safe avalanche conditions exist</li> <li>Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features</li> </ul>
<b>Likelihood of Avalanches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both natural and human triggered avalanche <b>unlikely</b></li> </ul>
<b>Avalanche Size &amp; Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very small avalanches in widespread areas or</li> <li>Small avalanche in isolated areas</li> </ul>

*Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.*

#### Recent Mountain Weather

<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuesday –Thursday ---</li> <li>Since midday Tuesday, a northwest flow rounding over a ridge of high pressure established calm, dry, and cold air over our region.</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Tuesday morning most recorded sites received an average of 1.0 inch of snow water equivalent (SWE). As the storm entered our region, a more moist dense snow initially fell and as the storm progressed the new snow was colder and dryer.</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the period Tuesday through Thursday, temperatures started a downward trend with lows into the single digits and highs around the mid teens. Overnight temperatures moderated a bit and climbed into the upper teens.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winds have been light from the W/SW during this period with very light transport.</li> </ul>

#### Field Observation Locations

Thursday, 1-12-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Big Creek Baldy Mountain in the Purcell Range, 18 miles north of Libby</li> <li>North of Picnic Notch on ridge between Noisy and Jewell Basins</li> </ul>
<b>Observer Report Locations</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None received</li> </ul>

#### Avalanches Observed

No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No recent natural avalanches were observed. Good visibility</li> </ul>
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★    Less★★    Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate amounts of new snow was delivered, with up to 1.0 inch of SWE on all Ranges</li> <li>Surface hoar has developed on new surface snow with overnight clearing and temperature inversions. This surface hoar once buried, could result in a new weak layer to contend with Saturday or Sunday with moderate accumulations predicted by Sunday.</li> </ul>		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predicted winds will increase from light to moderate wind speeds by Saturday loading NE, N, and E aspects .</li> </ul>		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new near surface ice layer, has developed with the last impulse of moisture to our region. This new ice layer which could be found from 20 to 30 cms down and , will likely vary in thickness with aspect. It did result in producing surface sluffs during observations on Thursday in the Noisy Basin area on a west aspect.</li> <li>Buried surface hoar layers or buried ice layers are still present within the snow pack especially on shaded aspects. These persistent weak layers will be tested with new additions of storm snow.</li> <li>As well, with the shallow snow pack some terrain is harboring weak decomposing faceted layers that are not typical for our</li> </ul>		

		region, at least, this late into the season. In the event of triggered or natural slide activity could result in deep slabs, possibly to the ground in the more shallow snow packs.
<b>Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze</b>		Not applicable
<b>Rain-on-Snow</b>		Not applicable
<b>Loose Snow</b>		None observed
<b>Other Concerns</b>		Weather forecasts are predicting heavy snows beginning Wednesday, 1/18, and is forecasted to continue into next weekend. A round of natural avalanche activity will likely be triggered if this series of Pacific storms develop. Stay tuned with current weather forecast discussions and the avalanche weather posted on the Missoula NOAA Site.

#### Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A cold front will pass through our region Saturday night bringing new snow accompanied by moderate winds above 6000 feet, accumulation are expected to be moderate to heavy in some locations. Colder temperatures will be expected on Sunday.</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least moderate snow fall is expected for a 36 hour period starting Saturday.</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperatures will warm a bit through today and Saturday and then drop with the entry of a cold front on Saturday night.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winds will escalate out of the SW from light to moderate by Saturday night.</li> </ul>

#### Avalanche Outlook

<b>Trend</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The avalanche danger is expected to escalate above 5000' elevation by Sunday morning.</li> </ul>
<b>Concern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New storm snow accompanied by moderate SW winds will stress a cold shallow snow pack.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment</b></li> <li><b>Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</b></li> <li><b>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on</b></li> <li><b>Know that shallow snow packs are notorious for producing trauma injury and death, washing victims over cliffs and into rocks.</b></li> </ul>

## Upcoming Events

Flathead National Forest will hold the last Saturday Field Session, for the first series of avalanche awareness tomorrow, 1/14, at Whitefish Mountain Resort. Our next series of the advanced public avalanche awareness safety training for mainly snowmobilers will start Monday, January 23rd. Classroom sessions will be offered on Monday's and Wednesday's, January 23, 25, 30 and February 1 from 1830 until 2130. Field sessions are currently planned for January 28<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup>. Lecture location is the Flathead National Forest Supervisors Office on Wolfpack Way.

Kootenai National Forest is currently presenting a Level 1 class with the the field session starting at 7 AM on Saturday Jan 14. Total time of session is approximately 10 hours. David Thompson SAR is involved and classroom is at their training facility in Libby.